

Discussion Questions

Bad Axe County by John Galligan



Questions created for Madison Public Library by the author.

1. Why did you choose to read *Bad Axe County*?
2. Heidi Kick is presented as the first and only female county sheriff in Wisconsin. By the time you read *Bad Axe County*, this may or not be true – but no matter what, it's very close to the facts on the ground. It is also true that female deputies in rural counties make up a far smaller percentage than, for example, the concentration of female officers in big-city police departments. Why is this? What implications does this have for people who live outside of cities? What impacts might this have on public safety, crime prevention, prosecution, justice, etc.?
3. As a woman in a position of power, Sheriff Kick faces several kinds of resistance from her community, some subtle and possibly unconscious, others explicitly sexist and cruel. Can you identify the different layers of push-back the new interim sheriff gets from the people around her? How do you think this relates to the experiences of real women in positions of power?
4. How does Sheriff Kick deal with sexual discrimination and harassment? Are her strategies effective? What other strategies might she pursue?
5. The sheriff and her dispatcher, Denise, exchange jokes that are raunchy and deliberately hostile and sexist toward women. Why? Are the jokes funny? Why or why not?
6. Angus Beavers is a serious and somewhat befuddled young man, just now figuring out what happened to him and what he might do about it. What did happen to him? What does his fate say about the position of his family in the social order of the Bad Axe? What do you think about his approach to restoring justice? Did he have other choices?
7. The young woman in danger in *Bad Axe County*, Pepper Greengrass, gets “passed up the food chain” as the story progresses. What does this mean?
8. Before you read *Bad Axe County*, what did you know/hear/think about sex trafficking? Where did your ideas and information come from?
9. Were you aware that human trafficking is a \$100 billion industry in the United States? That at any given moment, roughly 300, 000 children are being trafficked in the U.S.? That the majority of children who run away from home will be victims of sex trafficking within the first 72 hours? That the largest venues for sex trafficking are sporting events, and that NASCAR events top the list?

10. Do you think Interim Sheriff Heidi Kick will survive the special election? Do you think she will get beyond the nightmare of her past? How will she manage three kids, a husband, a job, a fractured community, and her own inner challenges? Would we ask these same questions of a man? Would you follow Sheriff Heidi Kick further on her journey as a law enforcement officer in rural Wisconsin? Why or why not?